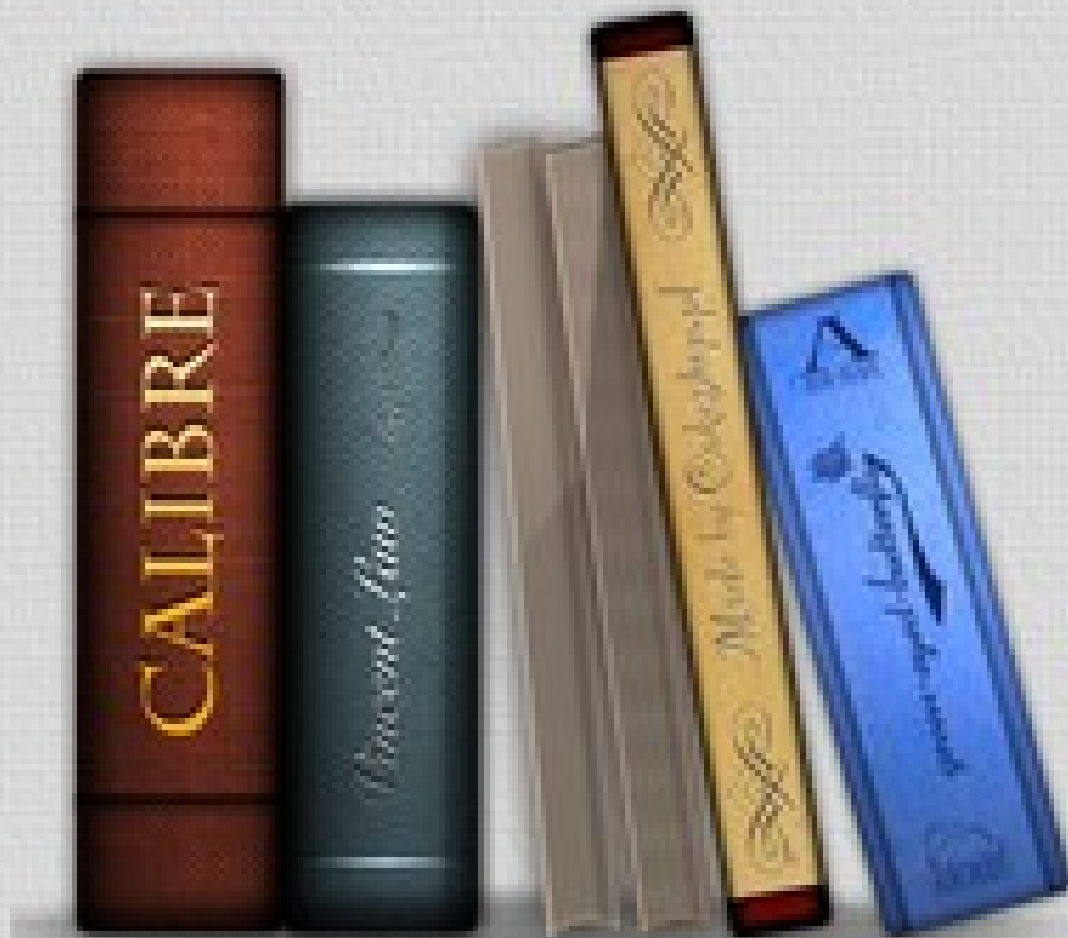


DGuzik 39 Malachi

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(Mal 1:1)

Introduction and God's Election of Israel

What follows is divine revelation.¹ The word of the LORD came to Israel through Malachi:2

(Guzik)

Mal 1:1-14

MALACHI 1 - "I HAVE LOVED YOU"

A. God's love for a rebellious Israel.

1. (Mal_1:1-2 a) God declares His love for Israel through the prophet Malachi.

The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. "I have loved you," says the LORD.

a. **To Israel by Malachi:** Malachi spoke to the exiles some 100 years after their initial return, after the days of Zechariah and Haggai. Malachi ministered either at the time of Nehemiah or immediately after his book closes.

i. We know this because in Malachi's day the temple was rebuilt (Mal_1:13; Mal_3:1; Mal_3:10).

ii. We know this because the Jews were under a civil ruler (the *governor* of Mal_1:8), and Nehemiah was the last civil ruler over Jerusalem.

iii. We know this because the sins that Malachi rebuked are the same sins Nehemiah rebuked.

· The priesthood was defiled (Neh_13:29, Mal_1:6 to Mal_2:9)

· Marriage was corrupt in Israel (Neh_13:23-25, Mal_2:14-15)

· The tithe that should go to the Levites was kept from them (Neh_13:10-11, Mal_3:8-12)

iv. By now, the temple is rebuilt, sacrifice and feasts have resumed but the dramatic promises of the prophets like Haggai and Zechariah are still far from

fulfillment. This left the nation languishing in the disappointment of unfulfilled hopes and has lulled them into a low regard for God. Israel needs an assurance of God's love and a challenge to their disobedience.

b. **"I have loved you," says the LORD:** Malachi will have a lot of specific correction for Israel, but before God corrects He assures them of His love. This lays a foundation for their obedience, because if they love Him, they will keep His commandments (Joh_14:15).

i. Morgan translates this as *"I have loved you, I do love you, I will love you," says the Lord.*

2. (Mal_1:2-5) Their first question: How has God demonstrated His love to Israel?

"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?*" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness." Even though Edom has said, "We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, 'The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel.'"

a. **In what way have You loved us?** This is the kind of question rarely spoken, but often harbored in the heart. It asks, "God, if you really love me why are things the way they are?"

i. The prophecy of Malachi is built around seven questions the people asked God. These questions revealed their doubting, discouraged, sinful heart.

In what way have You loved us? (Mal_1:2)

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In what way have we despised Your name? (Mal_1:6)

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In what way have we defiled You? (Mal_1:7)

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In what way have we wearied Him? (Mal_2:17)

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In what way shall we return? (Mal_3:7)

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In what way have we robbed You? (Mal_3:8)

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In what way have we spoken against You? (Mal_3:13)

b. Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated: God asks Israel to find assurance in His election. He wants them to understand that they are chosen and remain His chosen and favored people. When the people of Israel compared themselves to their neighbors the Edomites (the descendants of **Esau**), they saw that God chose to preserve Israel and punished the Edomites.

i. Obadiah promised judgment against the land and people of Edom. Apparently by Malachi's time it had happened, and God's choice of Israel assured His love for them.

ii. Understanding our election can bring a wonderful assurance of God's love. It means that God chose us before we existed and that the reasons for His choosing and loving

us are based in Him, not in us. Knowing God chose us gives us a sense of boldness and confidence in our walk with Him.

iii. Understanding our election gives assurance of love but since the finished work of Jesus we have a new demonstration of love: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom_5:8).

c. **Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated:** The choice of Jacob over Esau is a strong and classic example of God's election. God chose Jacob instead of Esau to carry the blessing promised to their grandfather Abraham. In some ways, Esau was a more likely candidate because though Jacob and Esau were twins, Esau was born first. Nevertheless Jacob was chosen, and chosen before he and Esau were ever born (Gen_25:23).

d. **Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated:** How could God *hate* Esau? He didn't hate Esau in the sense of cursing him or striking out against him. Indeed, Esau was a blessed man (Gen_33:9; Gen_36:1-43). Yet when God *chose* Jacob, He left Esau *unchosen* in regard to receiving the blessing given to Abraham.

i. In his commentary on Romans (where Paul quotes this Malachi passage in Rom_9:13) Leon Morris cites examples where *hate* clearly seems to mean something like "loved less" (Gen_29:31-33, Deu_21:15, Mat_6:24, Luk_14:26, Joh_12:25). Yet he agrees with Calvin's idea that the real thought here is much more like "accepted" and "rejected" more than it is like our understanding of the terms "loved" and "hated."

ii. Remember the reason why election is brought up here: not to exclude, but to comfort and reassure. "A woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, 'I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.' 'That,' Spurgeon replied, 'is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob.'" (William Newell in his commentary on Romans)

iii. Malachi *isn't* teaching double predestination. "Malachi is not speaking of the predestination of the one brother and reprobation of the other; he is contrasting the histories of the two peoples represented by them . . . Both nations sinned; both are punished; but Israel by God's free mercy was forgiven and restored, while Edom was left in the misery which it had brought upon itself by its own iniquity." (Pulpit)

e. Our greatest error in considering God's election is to think that God chooses for arbitrary reasons, as if He made choices in an "eeny-meeny-miny-moe" way of choosing. We may not understand God's reasons for choosing and they may be reasons He alone knows and answers to, but God's choices are not capricious. They make perfect sense knowing everything God knows and seeing everything God sees.

i. Some consider God's election as *conditional*, in the sense that it is based upon foreknowledge. Others consider God's election *unconditional*, based on God's sovereign choice. Here, it seems that the election of Jacob was *unconditional*. Though God knew what sort of men Jacob and Esau would become His election was not based on that.

ii. One might say, "I don't believe in Jesus; therefore I must not be chosen." That is fine, but then that person cannot blame God at all for not choosing them if they refuse to choose Him.

f. **And laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness:** The idea of God's preference for **Jacob** over **Esau** also extended to their descendents. The nation descended from Jacob (Israel) was conquered by the Babylonian Empire, and so was the nation descended from Esau (Edom). Yet God restored Israel from exile and at this point Edom had not been restored. God chose to show more favor to Jacob and his descendants.

g. **They may build, but I will throw down:** God promises that Edom will be permanently ruined, and that their status as "unchosen" won't change. As a reflection of God's

steadfast commitment to Israel, this is a comfort to God's people -

once He chose Israel they stay chosen, and God will not forsake them and choose another.

B. Sacrifices dishonoring to God are exposed and condemned.

1. (Mal_1:6-8) Their second and third questions: How have we despised the LORD? How have we defiled His ministry?

"A son honors *his* father, and a servant *his* master. If then I am the Father, where *is* My honor? And if I *am* a Master, where *is* My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.'

And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, *is it* not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Where is My honor?** Through Malachi, God asks the priests of Israel why they show so little respect and honor to Him in their sacrifices. They call God **Father**, they call Him **Master**, yet they do not honor Him and reverence Him with their sacrifices.

b. **To you priests who despise My name:** The priests of Israel presided over the sacrifices and it was their duty to uphold the honor and dignity of the sacrifices. Yet they offered **defiled food** to God, and offered animals that were **blind, lame, or sick**.

i. Passages such as Lev_22:20-23 and Deu_15:21 clearly prohibited offering blemished sacrifices.

c. **In what way have we despised Your name?** The priests weren't even aware that they **despised** God with their actions. This means that it came by degrees; they

probably did not know the extent of their offense, simply carrying on “business as usual.”

i. In ministry, it is easier than many people think to blindly continue in sin or mechanical indifference. God wanted Israel’s priests to think about their service to Him, and He wants today’s ministers to think just as carefully.

ii. Richard Baxter, a great Puritan writer, carefully considered the walk of the minister: “But consider plainly that the great and lamentable sin of ministers of the Gospel is that *they are not fully devoted to God*. They do not give themselves up wholly to the blessed work they have undertaken to do. Is it not true that flesh-pleasing and self-seeking interests - distinct from that of Christ - make us neglect our duty and lead us to walk unfaithfully in the great trust that God has given us? Is it not true that we serve God too cheaply? Do we not do so in the most applauded way? Do we not withdraw ourselves from that which would cost us the most suffering? Does not all this show that we seek earthly rather than heavenly things? And that we mind the things which are below? While we preach for the realities which are above, do we not idolize the world? So what remains to be said, brethren, but to cry that we are all guilty of too many of the aforementioned sins. Do we not need to humble ourselves in lamentation for our miscarriages before the Lord?” (Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*)

d. **You offer defiled food on My altar:** The altar was the place of sacrifice, and it belonged to God. Yet the priests of Malachi’s day disgraced God and His altar by offering **defiled food** to Him. Ministers today must never present **defiled food** to God in their ministry.

i. Pastor, your sermon is filled with funny jokes, clever anecdotes, and emotional stories but it lacks God’s word. You throw in a few Scriptures here and there to illustrate or back up your stories, but your sermon is really all about you. It isn’t about Jesus, it isn’t about His Word. Pastor, you are setting **defiled food on God’s altar**.

ii. Pastor, your sermon is sloppy - you don't do your work in the study, and you shoot from the hip. Worse yet, you don't labor in prayer and meditation over God's word and seek His message for the people. You don't hold fast the pattern of sound words. You don't rightly divide the word of truth. Pastor, you are setting **defiled food on God's altar**.

iii. Pastor, your sermon is cold - God forbid you should show some concern or passion in the pulpit. Your passion is reserved for other things - like football or golf. You can pontificate or argue with the best of them, but your messages have no deep passion for God or your people. You punch the clock and put in the time, but your heart for Jesus is cold. Pastor, you are setting **defiled food on God's altar**.

e. **The table of the LORD is contemptible:** The priests weren't grateful for their ministry, for their work before the LORD. They whined about what the people gave and the trouble of being a priest.

f. **Offer it then to your governor!** The priests and the people tried to give to God things that the government wouldn't accept as taxes. King David had a completely different heart, saying *nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing* (2Sa_24:24).

2. (Mal_1:9-11) God will be glorified but will it be by His present people?

"But now entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us. *While* this is being *done* by your hands, will He accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. Who *is there* even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire *on* My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; in every place incense *shall be* offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us:**

This phrase is rich with irony. Moffatt's paraphrase gives the sense: *Try to pacify God and win his favour? How can he favour any one of you, says the Lord of hosts, when you offer him such sacrifices?*

b. **Who would shut the doors:** God thought it was better to **shut the doors** rather than to continue worthless worship. Not everything that is offered to God as worship is accepted by God as worship. Sometimes He would prefer that it just stop and simply says, "**I have no pleasure in you.**"

i. We are concerned with church growth, evangelism, and planting churches. Yet in some cases the best thing we could do for the cause of the LORD is to **shut the doors** on many churches.

ii. "I am more afraid of profanity of the sanctuary than I am of the profanity of the street." (Morgan)

c. **My name shall be great among the Gentiles:** Yet, God will not go without worship. If the priests and people among the Jews will not worship Him in Spirit and in truth, God will find worshippers **among the Gentiles**.

d. **In every place incense shall be offered to My name:** This is a glorious promise that the true worship of God will extend all over the earth. Jesus' command to spread the Gospel and to go to every nation is part of God's way of fulfilling this promise.

i. "It is, therefore, inconceivable that a prophet should suggest that the nations of his own day were worshipping the Lord under another name (Isa_42:8). Rather is he proclaiming that the nations will come to know the God revealed in the Scriptures." (Baldwin)

3. (Mal_1:12-14) God promises to curse shallow, selfish, false worship.

"But you profane it, in that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, *is* contemptible.' You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," says the LORD

of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. "But cursed *be* the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished; for I *am* a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "And My name *is to be* feared among the nations."

a. **Contemptible . . . Oh, what a weariness!** Their selfish, insincere worship was also unsatisfying to the worshippers.

Because they did not meet God in their worship it was as hollow for them as it was for God. True worship is never **contemptible** or **a weariness**.

b. **Cursed be the deceiver:** In bringing God less than their best, they were deceivers, like Annanias and Saphira who pretended to surrender everything to God but really did not.

c. **I am a great King:** They simply did not treat God like a great King, one to be feared and honored. When we offer shallow, insincere worship to God we don't honor Him as a **great King**.

(Mal 1:2) "I have shown love to you," says the LORD, but you say, "How have you shown love to us?"

"Esau was Jacob's brother," the LORD explains, "yet I chose Jacob

(Mal 1:3) and rejected Esau.³ I turned Esau's⁴ mountains into a deserted wasteland⁵ and gave his territory⁶ to the wild jackals."

(Mal 1:4) Edom⁷ says, "Though we are devastated, we will once again build the ruined places." So the LORD who rules over all⁸

responds, "They indeed may build, but I will overthrow. They will be known as⁹ the land of evil, the people with whom the LORD is permanently displeased.

(Mal 1:5) Your eyes will see it, and then you will say, 'May the LORD be magnified¹⁰ even beyond the border of Israel!'

"

(Mal 1:6) ***The Sacrilege of Priestly Service***

"A son naturally honors his father and a slave respects¹¹ his master. If I am your¹² father, where is my honor? If I am your master, where is my respect? The LORD who rules over all asks you this, you priests who make light of my name! But you reply, 'How have we made light of your name?'

(Mal 1:7) You are offering improper sacrifices on my altar, yet you ask, 'How have we offended you?' By treating the table¹³ of the LORD

as if it is of no importance!

(Mal 1:8) For when you offer blind animals as a sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer the lame and sick,¹⁴ is that not wrong as well? Indeed, try offering them¹⁵ to your governor! Will he be pleased with you¹⁶ or show you favor?" asks the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 1:9) But now plead for God's favor¹⁷ that he might be gracious to us.¹⁸ "With this kind of offering in your hands, how can he be pleased with you?" asks the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 1:10) "I wish that one of you would close the temple doors,¹⁹ so that you no longer would light useless fires on my altar. I am not pleased with you," says the LORD who rules over all, "and I will no longer accept an offering from you.

(Mal 1:11) For from the east to the west my name will be great among the nations. Incense and pure offerings will be offered in my name everywhere, for my name will be great among the nations,"²⁰ says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 1:12) "But you are profaning it by saying that the table of the Lord is common and its offerings²¹ despicable.

(Mal 1:13) You also say, 'How tiresome it is.' You turn up your nose at it," says the LORD who rules over all, "and instead bring what is stolen, lame, or sick. You bring these things for

an offering! Should I accept this from you?"²² asks the LORD.

(Mal 1:14) "There will be harsh condemnation for the hypocrite who has a valuable male animal in his flock but vows and sacrifices something inferior to the Lord. For I am a great king,"²³ says the LORD who rules over all, "and my name is awesome among the nations."

(Mal 2:1) ***The Sacrilege of the Priestly Message***

"Now, you priests, this commandment is for you.

(Guzik)

Mal 2:1-17

MALACHI 2 - UNFAITHFUL PRIESTS AND BROKEN MARRIAGES

A. God exposes and condemns the unfaithful priesthood of Israel.

1. (Mal 2:1-4) God threatens to severely rebuke a wicked priesthood.

"And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take *it* to heart, to give glory to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take *it* to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your solemn feasts; and *one* will take you away with it. Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **If you will not hear:** If the priests will not hear and repent God promises to **curse** their **blessings**. This is either a reference to the "blessings" brought to the priests by the people, or the priestly **blessings** they gave to the people.

b. **Because you do not take it to heart:** Their sin all goes back to a hollow formalism. It is a religion of surface emotions and outward signs, but not of the **heart**.

c. **Spread refuse on your faces:** Sacrificed animals still had excrement in their systems, and God said this should be burned outside the sanctuary (Exo_29:14). Here, God says He will “rub their noses in it,” so that *they* will have to be taken outside the sanctuary.

d. **That My covenant with Levi may continue:** This shows the *motive* for God’s discipline against these ungodly priests. The LORD hoped that this would warn the priests back to a proper respect of His **covenant**.

2. (Mal_2:5-7) What a priest should be - the example of Levi.

“My covenant was with him, *one* of life and peace, and I gave them to him *that he might* fear *Me*; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and *people* should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”

a. **My covenant was with him:** God promised Levi that his descendants would be scattered in Israel. This was turned into a wonderful blessing when Levi was designated as the priestly tribe and the priests were sprinkled throughout Israel.

b. **So he feared Me:** God uses Levi as an example for the priests in the days of Malachi. Levi is shown to be an example of:

- Reverence: **He feared Me and was reverent before My name**

- Knowing God’s Word: **The law of truth was in his mouth**

- Godly character: **He walked with Me in peace and equity**

- Preserving and promoting God’s Word: **Should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his**

mouth

c. **The law of truth was in his mouth:** The priests had a special responsibility to hold and spread the word of God (2Ch_31:4, Neh_8:7-9). God's word was given to the priests for **life and peace**, and so they would be **reverent before** the LORD.

d. **The lips of a priest should keep knowledge:** Because the priests had to hold and spread God's word they had to do it with **knowledge**, so the people could **seek the law from his mouth**. Leaders should be knowledgeable messengers of God's word.

3. (Mal_2:8-9) Contrast between the ideal and the real.

But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law."

a. **You have departed from the way:** The priests *should have* held the word of God in knowledge, reverence, and obedience. Instead, they **departed from the way** and therefore **caused many to stumble at the law**.

b. **Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people:** Because the priests of Malachi's day fell so far short of God's ideal for them, the people held them in contempt.

B. God exposes and condemns their treachery, especially in their marriages.

1. (Mal_2:10) God rebukes the priests of Israel for their treacherous dealing.

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?

a. **Have we not all one Father?** This does not teach the idea of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine that all are saved or that God is everyone's father in the same way. This is a simple assertion that because we are all made in the image of God, we must respect and deal honorably with all.

b. **Why do we deal treacherously with one another:** Malachi will apply this specifically to marriage, but their sin of treachery went beyond their unfaithfulness in marriage.

i. "All betrayals, from the slightest unkindness to the grossest injustice, merit God's disapproval." (Alden) 2. (Mal_2:11-12) The first offense of the priests: marrying foreign wives.

Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the LORD's holy *institution* which He loves: he has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!

a. **The LORD's holy institution which He loves:** This tells us exactly how God feels about marriage. It is **holy** to Him; it is an **institution** to Him; and God **loves** marriage.

i. When we sin against our marriage or our marriage vows, we sin against something **holy** to God. He has *set apart* marriage for a special meaning, a special purpose in the life of His people.

ii. When we sin against our marriage or our marriage vows, we sin against an **institution** that God has established. Marriage is God's idea, not man's; He formed and established the first marriage as a pattern for every one afterwards (Gen_2:20-25). Because it is an **institution**, we are not allowed to define marriage any way that pleases us; God has established it and we must conform to what He has established.

iii. When we sin against our marriage or our marriage vows, we sin against something that God **loves**.

· God **loves** marriage for what it displays about His relationship with us · God **loves** marriage for the good it does in society · God **loves** marriage for the way it meets the needs of men, women, and children · Most of all, God **loves** marriage as a tool for conforming us into the image of His Son b. **He has married the daughter of a foreign god**: The first *treachery* and **abomination** God addresses is the intermarriage between the people of God and their ungodly neighbors. The dangers of an ungodly intermarriage are well documented in the Old and New Testaments.

i. Israel married women from Moab and brought the curse of God upon the people (Numbers 25).

ii. Solomon married foreign women who took his heart away from God (1Ki_11:1-10).

iii. Ahab married Jezebel - a foreign woman - who led Israel into new depths of depravity (1Ki_16:29-33).

iv. Paul says that believers and unbelievers should not be joined together (2Co_6:11-18).

c. **May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, yet who brings an offering**: God promised to punish the priests who married foreign, pagan wives and thought that it would not affect their service of the LORD.

i. **Awake and aware** is a tough phrase to translate. Other translations have “master and scholar,” “tempter and tempted,” “witness and advocate,” “kith and kin,” or even “nomads and settlers.” “Obviously, the Hebrew idiom is just another way of saying ‘everyone.’” (Alden)

ii. God’s command against mixed marriages in Israel had nothing to do with race, but with faith. There is even a foreign wife in the genealogy of Jesus - Ruth was a Moabite who married a Jewish man named Boaz; but she forsook Moab’s gods for the LORD (Rth_1:16).

3. (Mal_2:13-16) The second offense of the priests: a low regard of marriage.

And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” says the LORD of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

a. **You cover the altar of the LORD with tears . . . so He does not regard the offering anymore:** The neglected and divorced wives of the priests came and wept at God’s altar. When their priestly husbands then offered sacrifice to God at the same altar it offended God.

i. “They cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, namely, by compelling the wives who have been put away to lay their trouble before God in the sanctuary.” (Keil)

ii. Pastor, has your harsh, neglectful, or unkind treatment of your wife caused her to cry out before God? “You caused your poor wives, when they should have been cheerful in God’s service . . . to cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping, and with crying out.” (Trapp)

b. **Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously:** The priests sinned by forsaking the wife they married in their youth, breaking the goal of marriage (**she is your companion**) and the bond of marriage (**your wife by covenant**).

i. “They kept their wives till they had *passed their youth*, and then put them away, that they might get *young ones* in their place.” (Clarke)

c. **Did He not make them one:** The Bible continually comes back to God's goal and plan for marriage as revealed in Gen_2:18-25. Essential to God's plan for marriage is the essential oneness between husband and wife. One important reason for this oneness is to establish a proper environment for raising **godly offspring**.

d. **He hates divorce:** There is no doubt that God **hates divorce** because it destroys what He *loves* - marriage is *the LORD's holy institution which He loves* (Mal_2:11). Specifically, we can say that God **hates divorce** for at least three reasons:

- God hates divorce because it breaks a solemn vow
- God hates divorce because it is harmful
- God hates divorce because it illustrates apostasy and damnation

i. There is no doubt that God *allows* divorce in particular circumstances, though divorce is *never* commanded.

God's heart is *always* for repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation in marriage. We have sinned against God far worse than any spouse could sin against us, and God does not divorce us - though He has every right to!

ii. Yet because we are fallen and suffer from hardness of heart, God gives *permission* for divorce in two circumstances. Sexual immorality is valid grounds (Mat_19:1-9), and so is desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1Co_7:10-16).

iii. Significantly, *misery, unhappiness, poverty, or incompatibilities* are never given as grounds for divorce. Where there is danger or abuse separation may be in order in accordance with 1Co_7:10-11, but the separated couple must live in complete faithfulness to their marriage vows, though they live as separate.

iv. If someone does not have Biblical grounds for divorce, God regards them as still married and any subsequent relationship is considered adultery (Mat_19:8-9). It isn't that you *shouldn't* divorce for unbiblical grounds; you *can't*

divorce for unbiblical grounds. Nevertheless, if someone divorces with proper grounds, then they are free to remarry (1Co_7:15).

e. **It covers one's garment with violence:** Part of the marriage ceremony in Bible times involved the husband covering his wife with his garment as a symbol of the protection he brought her. But now, their garments were covered with violence. When a wife is forsaken or mistreated the man covers *his own* **garment with violence**. This is because the husband and wife are one, and he cannot mistreat his wife without bringing misery and destruction to himself.

i. This is Paul's point in Eph_5:28 : *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Simply said, when you love your wife, you benefit yourself.* Perhaps it is better to put it in the negative: *when you neglect your wife, you neglect yourself, and it will come back to hurt you.*

ii. We all know what it is like to neglect something - like a noise or a maintenance issue on an automobile - and it comes back to hurt you. Husbands, it is *even more true* regarding your wife, because *she is part of you*.

f. **Therefore take heed to your spirit:** This phrase is repeated twice because it is so important. The reason why the priests dealt treacherously against their wife is that they did not **take heed** to their **spirit**. They allowed their hearts to become hard, critical, and embittered against the woman they were supposed to regard as their special, God-given companion in oneness.

i. It is important to realize that we can *change* our feelings towards our spouse. If we do not feel loving or connected or caring about them, *that can be changed* if we will **take heed to our spirit**.

4. (Mal_2:17) The fourth question: Where is the God of justice in this unjust world?

You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, "In what way have we wearied *Him*?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil *is* good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where *is* the God of justice?"

a. **Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD:** The people of God in Malachi's day were depressed and discouraged because it seemed like the wicked prospered and had it better than the godly. This filled them with doubt and unbelief, and they grumbled that **everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD**.

b. **Where is the God of justice?** When they compared themselves with others, they thought it was unjust of God to bless others and not them. Nevertheless, their question shows that they don't understand what **the God of justice** would give to them.

c. **You have wearied the LORD with your words:** This kind of ignorant, unbelieving talk from God's people is wearisome to God. It shows how much His people resist His truth and His work.

i. "God is offended when people accuse Him of injustice."
(Boice)

(Mal 2:2) If you do not listen and take seriously¹ the need to honor my name," says the LORD who rules over all, "I will send judgment²

on you and turn your blessings into curses — indeed, I have already done so because you are not taking it to heart.

(Mal 2:3) I am about to discipline your children³ and will spread offal⁴ on your faces,⁵ the very offal produced at your festivals, and you will be carried away along with it.

(Mal 2:4) Then you will know that I sent this commandment to you so that my covenant⁶ may continue to be with Levi," says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 2:5) "My covenant with him was designed to bring life and peace. I gave its statutes to him to fill him with awe, and he indeed revered me and stood in awe before me.

(Mal 2:6) He taught what was true;⁷ sinful words were not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity, and he turned many people away from sin.

(Mal 2:7) For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge of sacred things, and people should seek instruction from him⁸ because he is the messenger of the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 2:8) You, however, have turned from the way. You have caused many to violate the law;⁹ you have corrupted the covenant with Levi,"¹⁰ says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 2:9) "Therefore, I have caused you to be ignored and belittled before all people to the extent to which you are not following after me and are showing partiality in your¹¹ instruction."

(Mal 2:10) ***The Rebellion of the People***

Do we not all have one father?¹² Did not one God create us? Why do we betray one another, in this way making light of the covenant of our ancestors?

(Mal 2:11) Judah has become disloyal, and unspeakable sins have been committed in Israel and Jerusalem.¹³ For Judah has profaned¹⁴

the holy things that the LORD loves and has turned to a foreign god!¹⁵

(Mal 2:12) May the LORD cut off from the community¹⁶ of Jacob every last person who does this,¹⁷ as well as the person who presents improper offerings to the LORD who rules over all!

(Mal 2:13) You also do this: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears¹⁸ as you weep and groan, because he no longer pays any attention to the offering nor accepts it favorably from you.

(Mal 2:14) Yet you ask, "Why?" The LORD is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young,¹⁹ to whom you have become unfaithful even though she is your companion and wife by law.²⁰

(Mal 2:15) No one who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him does this.²¹ What did our ancestor²² do when seeking a child from God? Be attentive, then, to your own spirit, for one should not be disloyal to the wife he took in his youth.²³

(Mal 2:16) "I hate divorce,"²⁴ says the LORD God of Israel, "and the one who is guilty of violence,"²⁵ says the LORD who rules over all.

"Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful."

(Mal 2:17) ***Resistance to the Lord through Self-deceit***

You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" Because you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the Lord's opinion,²⁶ and he delights in them," or "Where is the God of justice?"

(Mal 3:1) "I am about to send my messenger,¹ who will clear the way before me. Indeed, the Lord² you are seeking will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger³ of the covenant, whom you long for, is certainly coming," says the LORD who rules over all.

(Guzik)

Mal 3:1-18

MALACHI 3 - THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

A. The coming of the two messengers.

1. (Mal_3:1) The two messengers are introduced.

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Behold, I send My messenger:** This prophesied **messenger** is none other than John the Baptist. Mat_11:10, Mar_1:2, and Luk_7:27 each apply this promise to John the Baptist.

i. At the end of Malachi 2, Israel complained that God seemed to reward the wicked and did not exercise His justice in the world. God responds to their complaint by saying, "I

will set things right with My Messiah, and before Him will come **My messenger.**"

b. **And he will prepare the way before Me:** In an ancient royal procession the messenger went before the King to announce his arrival, to indicate the route, and to remove any obstacles in the road. John the Baptist fulfilled this exact ministry for Jesus. The same idea is indicated in Isa_40:3-5.

i. God's purpose for bringing this specific prophecy through Malachi in his day was probably because Israel complained that the Messianic promises of Haggai and Zechariah were not fulfilled. Here Malachi shows that the way for the Messiah must be *prepared*, and they aren't ready yet.

ii. **Before Me:** The LORD promises that He Himself will come - not merely a new or better prophet, but the LORD Himself.

c. **Even the Messenger of the covenant:** This second messenger is the LORD Himself - Jesus coming to **His temple** as the fulfillment of the old covenant and to institute a new covenant.

2. (Mal_3:2-5) This second Messenger will also come with purifying judgment; it will be a fearful coming.

"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He *is* like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien; because they do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Who can endure the day of His coming?** Mal_3:1 spoke of two messengers to come - one to prepare the way of the LORD, and one to be the *Messenger of the covenant*.

The **coming** that man must **endure** is the coming of the *Messenger of the covenant*, but it is His *second coming*.

i. "Like most Old Testament prophets, Malachi, in his picture of the coming Christ, mingled the two advents."

(Alden)

b. **He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap:**

The coming of this second Messenger will be awesome and terrible, but with a purpose. Both the launderer and the refiner work to clean, not to destroy.

i. **He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver:** "The beauty of this picture is that the refiner looks into the open furnace, or pot, and knows that the process of purifying is complete, and the dross all burnt away, when he can see his image plainly reflected in the molten metal." (Baldwin)

ii. "If any of you, my hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means: you are seeking a fire which will test you, and consume much which has been dear to you. We are not to expect Christ to come and save us in our sins, he will come and save us from our sins; therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Savior, remember that you take him as the purger and the purifier, for it is from sin that he saves us."

(Spurgeon)

iii. We note that **He will sit as a refiner**. "What a comfort it is that He surrenders this work to no other hands than his own. He may give his angels charge concerning us when we are in danger; but he keeps our purification beneath his special superintendence." (Meyer)

iv. At the same time, notice that **He will sit as a refiner**. The *sitting* posture shows that the refiner may seem indifferent, but He is not. He is carefully working with the silver, burning off and scraping away the dross that the flames bring to the top. "I think I see in the sitting down of the refiner a settled patience, as if he seemed to say, 'This is stern work, and I will sit down to it, for it will need care, and time, and constant watchfulness.'" (Spurgeon) v. "If you are

just now in the fire, dear soul, be of good cheer - it shows at least that you are silver, and are capable of performing more acceptable service in God's holy Temple." (Meyer)

c. **He will purify the sons of Levi:** In the first two chapters of Malachi, the LORD spoke out against the corruption of the priesthood. Here, God gives His ultimate answer for that corruption - the Messiah **will purify the sons of Levi.**

i. "Have you ever reflected upon the fact that when Christ's refining work is done upon us there will never be any need for it again? Blessed be God, there is no purgatorial fire. We need not dread that we have yet to pass through purging flames in another world." (Spurgeon)

d. **I will be a swift witness against sorcerers:** God's ultimate purpose is to cleanse society, and to change the hearts of men. When Jesus returns in glory and rules on this earth, evil will be quickly punished.

i. **Sorcerers:** This sin is mentioned first because the Jews became familiar with sorcery and other magical arts during their captivity in Babylon.

B. Returning to God instead of robbing God.

1. (Mal_3:6-7) While declaring His mercy, God asks for repentance.

"For I *am* the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' "

a. **I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed:** If it were *possible* for God to change His mind about us, He might very well do it and we would be **consumed**. Fortunately the LORD does **not change** in His love or His choice towards us.

b. **Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances:** God's unchanging love for Israel should have made them more obedience and

submitted to Him, but they presumed upon His faithfulness and patience.

c. **Return to Me, and I will return to you:** In its most basic sense, repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. It isn't so much *required* if we want to return to God; repentance describes what the very act of returning is.

d. **In what way shall we return?** Israel didn't know how to return to God. Either they *chose* not to know or they simply were ignorant.

2. (Mal_3:8-12) How Israel needed to repent.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you *such* blessing that *there will not be room enough to receive it*. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the LORD of hosts; "and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Will a man rob God?** It seems crazy to think that a man could rob God. What could someone possibly steal from God?

The LORD makes it clear - they **robbed God** by withholding their **tithes and offerings**.

i. It's an expression of astonishment: **Will a *man* rob God?**

- Astonishing because it is such a daring thing to do
- Astonishing because it is shamefully ungrateful
- Astonishing because it is senselessly self-destructive
- Astonishing because it will certainly be punished

ii. God calls it robbery because they had unlawful possession of what belonged to God. It isn't because *only* the **tithes and offerings** belonged to God. In fact, *everything* we have

belongs to God (Psa_24:1). Yet God does not normally command us to give everything that belongs to Him; He allows us to keep some as managers on His behalf. But the **tithes and offerings** are different; they are not given to us to manage - they belong to what the LORD calls **My house**, the **house** of the LORD.

iii. If you give a tithe - that is, 10% of your income or assets - to God, it isn't as if the remaining 90% is yours to do with as you please. It all belongs to God, but He allows you to directly manage the remaining 90%.

iv. The Law of Moses had a detailed system of giving based on the tithe (Deu_14:22-29 is one passage describing this system). If you failed to pay your tithe, you were assessed a 20% penalty (Lev_5:14-16; Lev_22:14; Lev_27:31-32). Nevertheless, tithing predated the law (Gen_14:18-20).

b. **You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me**: Because God's people did not give as He commanded, God did not bless them materially or spiritually the way He would have otherwise. Their stingy hearts proved that their hearts were far from God, because God is the greatest giver (Joh_3:16).

i. Many people with financial problems fail to do the most important thing first: obey and honor God with their resources. When we put God and His kingdom first, He promises to meet our other needs (Mat_6:33).

c. **Bring all the tithes into the storehouse**: This was the answer to their problems - to actually *do* what God commanded them to do, and to **bring all the tithes** to God. It wasn't that they didn't give anything to God; they simply did not **bring all the tithes** to Him. They must not fall short in giving God everything that He asked for.

i. Under the New Covenant, are we under a similar command to tithe? The New Testament nowhere specifically commands tithing, but it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luk_11:42).

ii. It is also important to understand that tithing is not a principle that depends on the Law of Moses. Heb_7:5-9 explains that tithing was practiced and honored by God before the Law of Moses.

iii. What the New Testament does speak with great clarity on is the principle of *giving*. 1Co_16:1-4 makes it clear that our giving must be:

- Periodic
- Planned
- Proportional
- Private

iv. As well, 2 Corinthians 9 tells us that giving must be:

- Generous
- Freely given
- Cheerful

v. Since the New Testament doesn't emphasize tithing, one might not be strict on it for Christians (though some Christians do argue against tithing on the basis of self-interest). Nevertheless, giving is to be proportional so we should give *some* percentage so ten percent is a good benchmark. For some, 10% should really be the beginning of their giving.

vi. If our question is, "how little can I give and still please God?" then our heart isn't in the right place at all. We should have the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: "We're not under the tithe - we can give *more!*" Giving and financial management are *spiritual* issues not just a financial issues (Luk_16:11).

d. **That there may be food in My house:** The purpose of the tithe was primarily to support the priests who ministered before the LORD. When the people did not bring their tithes, the priests were not properly supported and there was not enough **food** for them in the **house** of the LORD.

i. The tithe in Israel was also to be used to help the poor, and once every three years some of it was put aside for that

purpose (Deu_14:28-29). Still, the main purpose for the tithe was to support the tribe of Levi and the priests (Deu_14:27).

ii. The same principle carries over in the New Testament. Some think that a paid ministry is an abomination before God, but Paul made it clear that not only do ministers deserve to be supported by those they minister to (1Ti_5:18, 2Co_9:4-14) but also that their support is even more worthy than the poor (1Ti_5:17). Nevertheless, Paul voluntarily yielded his right to be supported when he thought it was in the best interests of the gospel to do so (2Co_9:12; 2Co_9:15).

e. **And try Me now in this:** It's hard to find a comparable passage of Scripture - where the LORD *commands* His people to test Him. Here, in regard to giving and His blessing of it, He tells His people "**try Me now in this.**" "See if you can give to Me and be the poorer for it. See if you can out-give Me."

i. "The context for God's words about tithes is the teaching that God is faithful. The matter of tithes is only an illustration of that teaching." (Boice)

f. **Open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it:** This is the response God promises when His people give as He tells them to. He will bless them both with provision and protection (**I will rebuke the devourer**).

i. The reference to the **windows of heaven** reminds us of the glorious account of provision in 2 Kings 7, when God provided in a completely unexpected way. God has resources that we know nothing about, and it is often of no help to try and figure out - or worry about - how God will provide.

C. What good is it to serve God?

1. (Mal_3:13-15) God's people ask the question.

"Your words have been harsh against Me," says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have

said, 'It is useless to serve God; what profit *is it* that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free.' "

a. **Your words have been harsh against Me:** Israel spoke against the LORD in a harsh and sinful way - and they apparently didn't even realize they did it.

b. **It is useless to serve God:** These were the harsh words spoken by God's people against God. They saw the prosperity of the **proud** and those who did **wickedness**, and they felt that it was **useless to serve God** as long as those who didn't serve Him seemed to have it so good.

i. It cost something to keep God's **ordinance**, and they had to humble themselves to walk **as mourners before the LORD**. Yet it seemed to God's people that cost wasn't worth the reward.

2. (Mal_3:16-18) The comfort of knowing that God remembers.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard *them*; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

a. **Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another:** Discouraged by the sense that it wasn't worth the trouble to serve God, the people of God came together - **spoke to one another** - and encouraged each other in the LORD.

i. When God's people speak to one another in this way, the LORD listens from heaven. He loves to see true fellowship and love among His people.

b. **A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name:** When they saw the wicked rewarded and the righteous suffer, it made them think that God forgot all their good.

Here Malachi promises that not only will God remember, but He will write it down!

i. The thought that God has a **book of remembrance** is common, but varied (Exo_32:32-33; Psa_69:28; Psa_87:6; Dan_12:1).

c. **They shall be Mine . . . My jewels:** In the midst of suffering, assaulted by doubt and discouragement, God's people didn't feel like God's **jewels**. Yet their feeling didn't change the fact, and they needed to let God's fact be greater than their feeling.

i. It was a spiritually low time for Israel - the priests and the people were steeped in corruption and mediocrity. At the same time, God always has His **jewels**. Even if everyone around you turns away from the LORD, you can still be one of His **jewels**.

ii. Ways that Christians are like **jewels**:

- They are hard and durable
- They are prized for their luster
- They are prized for their rarity
- They are made by God alone
- They are of all different sizes, yet they are all jewels
- They are found all over the world
- They are associated with royalty
- They are protected
- Some are hidden and undiscovered
- Some are not yet polished

d. **Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked:** One day this dilemma will be cleared up.

In the end, the distinction between the **righteous** and the **wicked** will be evident.

(Mal 3:2) Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can keep standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire,⁴ like a launderer's soap.

(Mal 3:3) He will act like a refiner and purifier of silver and will cleanse the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will offer the LORD a proper offering.

(Mal 3:4) The offerings⁵ of Judah and Jerusalem⁶ will be pleasing to the LORD as in former times and years past.

(Mal 3:5) "I⁷ will come to you in judgment. I will be quick to testify against those who practice divination, those who commit adultery, those who break promises,⁸ and those who exploit workers, widows, and orphans,⁹ who refuse to help¹⁰ the immigrant¹¹ and in this way show they do not fear me," says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 3:6) ***Resistance to the Lord through Selfishness***

"Since, I, the LORD, do not go back on my promises,¹² you, sons of Jacob, have not perished.

(Mal 3:7) From the days of your ancestors you have ignored¹³ my commandments¹⁴ and have not kept them! Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD who rules over all. "But you say, 'How should we return?'

(Mal 3:8) Can a person rob¹⁵ God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and contributions!¹⁶

(Mal 3:9) You are bound for judgment¹⁷ because you are robbing me — this whole nation is guilty.¹⁸

(Mal 3:10) "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse¹⁹ so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter," says the LORD

who rules over all, "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all.

(Mal 3:11) Then I will stop the plague²⁰ from ruining your crops,²¹ and the vine will not lose its fruit before harvest," says the LORD

who rules over all.

(Mal 3:12) "All nations will call you happy, for you indeed will live in²² a delightful land," says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 3:13) ***Resistance to the Lord through Self-sufficiency***

"You have criticized me sharply,"²³ says the LORD, "but you ask, 'How have we criticized you?'

(Mal 3:14) You have said, 'It is useless to serve God. How have we been helped²⁴ by keeping his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD who rules over all?²⁵

(Mal 3:15) So now we consider the arrogant to be happy; indeed, those who practice evil are successful.²⁶ In fact, those who challenge²⁷

God escape!' "

(Mal 3:16) Then those who respected²⁸ the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD took notice.²⁹ A scroll³⁰ was prepared before him in which were recorded the names of those who respected the LORD and honored his name.

(Mal 3:17) "They will belong to me," says the LORD who rules over all, "in the day when I prepare my own special property.³¹ I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

(Mal 3:18) Then once more you will see that I make a distinction between³² the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.

(Mal 4:1) (3:19)¹ "For indeed the day² is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant evildoers will be chaff. The coming day will burn them up," says the LORD who rules over all. "It³ will not leave even a root or branch.

(Guzik)

Mal 4:1-6

MALACHI 4 - THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. The final resolution.

1. (Mal_4:1) Resolution of the wicked.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.”

a. **The day is coming:** Discouraged by the apparent prosperity of the wicked and uselessness of serving the LORD, God’s people needed to be reminded that **the day is coming**. God still has eternity to right all wrongs and reward all good.

b. **Burning like an oven:** God promised a fire for His people (Mal_2:2-3) and here He promises a fire for the wicked.

But there is a big difference between the refining fire applied to God’s people and the burning fire against the ungodly.

c. **All who do wickedly will be stubble:** **Stubble** is the unusable part of the grain, and lasts only moments if it is thrown into a fire.

d. **Leave them neither root nor branch:** In that coming day the wicked will have no hope of shooting up again to life.

As long as a root remains there is hope, but hope is gone for these because the judgment of eternity is final.

2. (Mal_4:2-3) Resolution of the righteous.

“But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do *this*,”

says the LORD of hosts.

a. **But to you who fear My name:** In the previous verse God promised a judgment of fire for the *proud*, but God says that those **who fear My name** will be saved.

b. **The Sun of Righteousness shall arise:** From the time of early Christians like Justin Martyr to today, Christians

have regarded the *Sun of Righteousness* as a reference to Jesus.

i. In many passages God is related to a planet or star (Psa_84:11, Isa_60:19, Rev_22:16, Num_24:17). Here, the Messiah is not only a **Sun**, but also the **Sun of Righteousness** who brings **healing**.

ii. "He went under a cloud in his passion, and brake forth again in his resurrection. From heaven he daily darts forth his beams of righteousness, and showers down all spiritual blessings in heavenly privileges." (Trapp) c. **With healing in His wings**: The **wings** of the sun are the rays or sunbeams it sends out. They bring healing, joy, and wholeness. When the **Sun of Righteousness** shines, we need no other light or warmth. Imagine trying to light a candle on a sunny day to help out the sun! That makes as much sense as trying to "improve" the work of Jesus for us with our own righteousness.

d. **You shall trample the wicked**: When God's people see the final resolution of all things they will be so happy they will jump about like **stall-fed calves** set free from the pen. As they jump about with joy, the **wicked** are trampled beneath their feet.

i. "Understand the figure. The calf in the stall is shut up, tied up with a halter at night, but when the sun rises the calf goes forth to the pasture; the young bullock is set free. So the child of God may be in bondage. The recollection of past sins and present unbelief may halter him up and keep him in the stall, but when the Lord reveals himself he is set free." (Spurgeon)

ii. We can see a glorious progression in those who look upon the risen **Sun of Righteousness** and receive the **healing in His wings**:

- They **shall go out** - they will be free and enjoy their liberty
- They shall **grow fat** - growing strong and prosperous in the LORD

· They shall **trample the wicked** - enjoying the LORD's victory in their life B. The concluding words of the Old Testament.

1. (Mal_4:4) Remember the Law of Moses.

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *with the statutes and judgments.*"

a. **Remember the Law of Moses:** In these last few prophetic words of the Old Testament, Malachi warns Israel to **remember** the Law, because God's prophetic voice would be silent for some 400 years. We never need to despair when God seems silent, because what He has already said is rich enough - if we will only **remember**.

b. **With the statutes and judgments:** The last few words of the Old Testament are a call back to the Law - because under the Old Covenant man related with God on the basis of Law. Thank God for the New Covenant - *for the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (Joh_1:17).

2. (Mal_4:5-6) Elijah will come.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

a. **I will send you Elijah the prophet:** In this unique promise, God assures that He will send **Elijah** to Israel again before **the great and dreadful day of the LORD**.

i. This was fulfilled in John the Baptist in a figurative sense (Mat_11:14, Mar_9:11-13, Luk_1:17). Yet because this Elijah comes **before the coming of the great and dreadful day**, we know that the Elijah prophecy is only completely fulfilled before the Second Coming of Jesus. Joh_17:11-12 and Rev_11:3-12 speak of this future fulfillment, when God will either send Elijah back to the earth on this special

errand, or send someone uniquely empowered in the spirit and office of Elijah.

ii. In anticipation of this, Jewish homes set a place at the table for Elijah at Passover, just in case he might come on that night to announce the news that Messiah has come. The empty chair and the cup that is filled but never drank is a testimony to their anticipation of Elijah's coming.

b. **Elijah the prophet:** Why **Elijah**? Because he ministered in a time of crisis in Israel, when the nation was far from God, and a time that immediately preceded a terrible judgment.

i. It is significant that in these closing words of the Old Testament, God makes reference to both Moses and Elijah. They both met God at Mount Sinai (Exo_3:1; 1Ki_19:8-18). They also both met Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat_17:1-5). They are probably the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

d. **He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children:** This promise speaks of more than the reconciliation of families. When God turns **the hearts of the children to their fathers**, it also has in mind turning to the God of their fathers, to the faith of the patriarchs.

e. **Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse:** The Old Testament ends with the threat of a curse, but also with the expectation of a new dawning of the Sun of Righteousness.

i. This ending of the Book of Malachi bothered the ancient Jews. "The Masorites, who have given us most of the copies of the Hebrew Old Testament we have . . . were so bothered by this that they repeated the next-to-the-last verse of Malachi after the last verse. Similarly, the Septuagint reverses the last two verse so the Old Testament ends, not with a curse, but with a blessing." (Boice)

ii. The end of the New Testament recognizes the rising of the Sun of Righteousness: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!* (Rev_22:21)

(Mal 4:2) But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication⁴ will rise with healing wings,⁵ and you will skip about⁶ like calves released from the stall.

(Mal 4:3) You will trample on the wicked, for they will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD who rules over all.

(Mal 4:4) ***Restoration through the Lord***

"Remember the law of my servant Moses, to whom at Horeb⁷ I gave rules and regulations for all Israel to obey.⁸

(Mal 4:5) Look, I will send you Elijah⁹ the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD arrives.

(Mal 4:6) He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me,¹⁰ so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment."¹¹